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POLAND: Speculation About Ending Martial Law

Polish officials are speculating that martial law might be ended and Lech Walesa released within the next few months.

[REDACTED] that Walesa would be released in October, all former trade unions dissolved in November, and martial law lifted before 13 December. He noted, however, that these steps would be "merely formalistic" and designed to appease the West.

Another Polish diplomat recently said martial law "definitely" will be lifted this fall because Poland cannot be governed effectively by military rule. He also asserted that, following the passage of a law on trade unions and a return to stability, Walesa would be released--perhaps next spring.

[REDACTED] speculation the regime will abolish Solidarity, but only after enacting a trade union law this fall that would allow a phased reintroduction of unions over three years. [REDACTED] have inferred that recent articles criticizing Solidarity are a prelude to its abolition.

Comment: Since imposing martial law, Premier Jaruzelski has shown a cautious determination to restore the appearance of normality. Although martial law might formally be revoked in the coming months, the regime probably would be given "special emergency powers" to ensure its control.

A new trade union law that implicitly or explicitly dissolves Solidarity would radicalize those underground leaders who had hoped for its reconstitution, even if in a weakened form. Some reportedly have threatened a general strike if the union is abolished.

Many rank-and-file workers apparently already believe Solidarity cannot be revived. Some, however, would be more willing to participate in periodic demonstrations, and the mood of anger and distrust toward the authorities would grow. The release of Walesa and other senior union leaders probably would be one of the last steps in the "normalization" process.

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